

March is Women’s History Month *Focus on Women*



JSC Photos by Robert Markowitz S99-03240
Lauri Hansen



S99-03242
Nanette Cerna



S99-03243
Gloria Araiza-Young



S99-03241
Carla Guidry



S99-03239
Laura Pepper

By Deborah Acosta Conder

For five women at JSC, the work day is exciting and fulfilling, with meetings to attend, programs and projects to manage, decisions to make and deadlines to meet. And at the end of a busy day, there are families who need attention and other activities to be involved in. It’s all a matter of balance, commitment and a job you love. Just ask Lauri Hansen, Gloria Araiza-Young, Carla Guidry, Laura Pepper and Nanette Cerna.

The JSC Cooperative Education Program provided an entry point for these five outstanding JSC women during the 1980s. What else do they have in common? All are hard working and dedicated to their careers and to the nation’s space program. All seem to have found a balance between a rewarding career, an active family life and other outside interests.

These women shared their career highlights at JSC since graduating from the Cooperative Education Program. These women chose NASA because of the exciting environment and the opportunity to make a difference.

Hansen, deputy for Systems Engineering, says, “Nowhere else was the work as exciting. Also, I felt that working at NASA provided an opportunity to have some real impact in aerospace.” Prior to moving to the Engineering Directorate, she was the deputy vehicle manager for

the International Space Station. A 1985 graduate of the University of Michigan, she wants to be involved in the program management of a Mars mission, a goal she hopes to achieve before she retires.

“I basically grew up with NASA because my father worked here, so I never really considered another career,” says Cerna, in response to why she chose a career at JSC. Currently a payload integration manager for the Space Shuttle Program, Cerna has most enjoyed being a subsystem manager for orbiter because of interfaces of different disciplines at different levels. She also was a test manager at the Thermochemical Test Area and enjoyed that role because of the “hands-on” work.

For Araiza-Young, a 1982 mathematics graduate from Texas Woman’s University, the most exciting work accomplishments have been as part of the Mission Control Center Flight Control Team as a certified ascent, orbit, and entry flight controller. Araiza-Young, who is currently working as a technical assistant for Shuttle Integration, hopes to continue to use her integration and operational skills in upcoming NASA initiatives.

Guidry, a mathematician, has worked on the Single System Trainer both as a software simulation engineer and by developing a complicated math model for the Stabilized Payload Deployment System. Guidry also worked in the Mission Operations Directorate as a payload integration engineer before becoming a technical manager’s

representative for her division in the Space and Life Sciences Directorate.

“The ISS Acquisition Office is a great place to be right now because we can see the work we’ve done to

support the program coming to fruition as the ISS is assembled,” says Pepper, an acquisition team lead for the ISS. Pepper, a contracting officer, is looking forward to some of the new initiatives that will affect how NASA does business, such as commercialization.

In addition to their full careers, these women are involved in a variety of outside interests. They not only spend time with their own children, but in Guidry’s case, she is also involved in student outreach activities. For Hansen, training retriever dogs, fishing and hiking are in her after work plans. For physical activity, Tai Chi

does it for Pepper and running the 2000 Houston-Tenneco Marathon is a goal for Araiza-Young. As for the fine arts, Guidry is involved in the performing arts and Pepper plays the piano.

When asked about what advice they can provide to other JSC women, Cerna and Araiza-Young suggest always doing the best job you can, taking the initiative, working smart and being a team player. Guidry added, “Show respect at all times and demand respect in return. Don’t be intimidated by anyone.” Hansen suggests taking the initiative and “seeing what needs to be done rather than waiting for someone to hand you something interesting.” “While your career is important, don’t sacrifice your family life and outside interests,” adds Pepper.

These women don’t plan on retiring any time soon and they see the future of the space program, and for themselves, in the many exciting space initiatives currently under way. They include the X-38, Trans-Hab, Regenerative Life Support, the ISS, a voyage to Mars, a return trip to the moon and other development programs that will keep NASA on the technological “cutting edge.” With these women involved, NASA will surely remain on the cutting edge.

In recognition of Women’s History Month, there will be a “Focus on Women” exhibit on display March 10-12 at the Bldg. 3 cafeteria and March 15-17 at Ellington Field. ■

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– Laura Pepper

Thomas receives Kazakhstan’s state award

Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United States Bolat Nurgaliyev, left, presents the high state award of Kazakhstan – order “Dostyk” (“Friendship”) – to Astronaut Andy Thomas during a recent visit to JSC. Thomas, Kazakh Cosmonaut Talgat Musabaev and French Research Cosmonaut Leopold Eyharts worked together on board Mir last year, completing numerous research projects including those comprising the Kazakhstan scientific program. Last November, Nursultan Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan, awarded the crewmembers the high state order in recognition of their exceptional courage, cooperation and excellent work. ■

